

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USLO PEKING

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 157308

FOLLOWING REPEAT BANGKOK 11547 ACTION SECSTATE INFO
COLOMBO JAKARTA MANILA KUALA LUMPUR NEW DELHI
SINGAPORE TEHRAN 17 JULY.

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 11547

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

CINCEUR FOR POLAD

POUCHED: AMEMBASSY CANBERRA, WELLINGTON, LONDON, DACCA, MOSCOW,
USLO PEKING, AMEMBASSY KABUL, MOGADISCIO, ISLAMABAD, DAR ES SALAM,
JIDDA, USINT BAGHDAD, AMEMBASSY SAN'A

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MARR, PARM, US, XO

SUBJECT: U.S. SUPPORT OF INDIAN OCEAN ACTIVITIES FROM THAILAND

REF: BANGKOK 11379 (NOTAL)

1. ON JULY 12 THE ROYAL THAI GOVERNMENT REQUESTED THAT
THE U.S. STOP ALL RECONNAISSANCE FLIGHTS OVER THE INDIAN
OCEAN FROM UTAPAO ROYAL THAI NAVY AIR BASE. IN THE HOPES
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THAT THE RTG MIGHT UNDER SOME FUTURE CIRCUMSTANCES RECONSIDER
ITS DECISION, THE AMBASSADOR HAS ENDEAVORED TO INFLUENCE
RANKING THAI OFFICIALS' THINKING ABOUT THE INDIAN OCEAN
AND THE SOUNDNESS OF ALIGNING THAI POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES

IN THIS AREA WITH THOSE OF THE U.S.

2. THE AMBASSADOR DISCUSSED THE SUBJECT ORALLY SINCE THE THAI DECISION TO HALT THE FLIGHTS WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER, THE DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER, AND THE THAI AMBASSADOR TO THE U.S. EFFORTS ARE ALSO BEING MADE BY EMBASSY OFFICERS WITH LOWER LEVEL THAI OFFICIALS. AMBASSADOR ANAN IS BELIEVED TO HAVE PLAYED A VERY IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE TAAI DETERMINATION TO STOP RECONNAISSANCE FLIGHTS AND PARTICULAR ATTENTION HAS BEEN DIRECTED TOWARD HIM. IN THE RATIONALE UTILIZED, THE EMBASSY ATTEMPTED TO PRESENT THE U.S. CONCERN OVER INDIAN OCEAN ACTIVITIES IN THE LIGHT OF PAST, PRESENT, AND POTENTIAL INTEREST IN THE DEVELOPMENTS THERE.

3. IN ADDITION TO ORAL DISCUSSION, THE AMBASSADOR PROVIDED THE MFA WITH THE DRAFT OF A PAPER ENTITLED "THOUGHTS ON THE INDIAN OCEAN ZONE OF PEACE". THIS WAS PRESENTED AS A WORKING PAPER AND AN ATTEMPT TO REFINE OUR THINKING ON THIS IMPORTANT SUBJECT. TEXT OF THE DRAFT FOLLOWS. ANY COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS TO STRENGTHEN OUR EFFORT TO PERSUADE THE THAI IT IS IN THEIR INTEREST TO SUPPORT U.S. INDIAN OCEAN ACTIVITY AND POLICIES WOULD BE GREATLY APPRECIATED.

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED:

1. MOST NATIONS, INCLUDING THE UNITED STATES, CAN SUPPORT IN PRINCIPLE THE CONCEPT OF AN INDIAN OCEAN ZONE OF PEACE. THE APPEAL IS ALMOST IRRESISTIBLE AND THERE IS CONJECTURE THAT SOME NATIONS MAY HAVE ENDORSED THE PROPOSED ZONE MORE BECAUSE OF ITS ATTRACTIVENESS IN THE ABSTRACT THAN ON THE BASIS OF HARD ANALYSIS OF ALL ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR BOTH THE SHORT AND THE LONG RUN. CONCERNS ABOUT THE ZONE DERIVE PRIMARILY FROM FEAR THAT THE CONCEPT MIGHT BE USED AS A CONTRIVANCE TO UPSET THE EXISTING BALANCE OF POWER AND THREATEN THE LONG-ESTABLISHED PRINCIPLE OF FREEDOM OF THE SEAS.

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2. THE INDIAN OCEAN ZONE OF PEACE CONCEPT WAS FIRST DEVELOPED BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF SRI LANKA AS A PLOY AT THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY. THE IDEA WAS LATER COOPTED BY THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT AND LATER ENTHUSIASTICALLY ENDORSED BY THE SOVIET UNION. THESE TWO COUNTRIES APPEAR TO HAVE THE MOST TO GAIN FROM THE INDIAN OCEAN ZONE OF PEACE CONCEPT AND THEY PLEDGED COOPERATION IN PROMOTING IT IN THE JOINT BREZHNEV-GANDHI DECLARATION OF 1973.

3. RELATED TO THIS INDIAN OCEAN ZONE OF PEACE CONCEPT IS THE ASEAN RESOLUTION ON THE SAME THEME INTRODUCED BY PRIME MINISTER ABDUL RAZAK OF MALAYSIA. THAT RESOLUTION INITIALLY RECEIVED PERFUNCTORY ACCOMMODATION FROM THE OTHER ASEAN

PARTNERS. IT WAS RECOGNIZED AT THE TIME AS A MALAYSIAN RESPONSE TO THE DECLINING CAPABILITIES OF THE COMMONWEALTH DEFENCE AGREEMENT (AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND, SINGAPORE, MALAYSIA AND THE U.K.). THE AUSTRALIAN DECISION TO CUT BACK EVEN MORE NOW AND THE U.N. GENERAL ASSEMBLY INTEREST IN THE INDIAN OCEAN ZONE OF PEACE WILL PROBABLY RAISE THE LEVEL OF ATTENTION AND ANALYSIS GIVEN TO THIS GENERAL SUBJECT.

4. INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH, THE CONCEPT'S ORIGINATOR, MADAME BANDARANAIKE, IS NO LONGER PARTICULARLY ENCHANTED WITH HER BRAINCHILD, POSSIBLY BECAUSE OF THE GREATLY CHANGED BALANCE OF POWER WITHIN THE REGION OCCASIONED BY THE 1971 INDIAN-PAKISTAN WAR. THE VERY TRENDS WHICH SEEM TO PLEASE AND SATISFY THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT APPEAR TO BE CAUSING CONCERNS AMONG NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES. INDIA WOULD PROBABLY LIKE TO HAVE THE INDIAN OCEAN AREA FOR ITSELF OR AT THE VERY LEAST UNDER SOME SHARED ARRANGEMENT WITH THE SOVIETS.

5. DURING THE 18TH AND 19TH CENTURIES THAI LEADERS WATCHED EUROPEAN POWERS, PARTICULARLY GREAT BRITAIN WITH ITS ENORMOUS INDIAN BASE, USE THE INDIAN OCEAN AS A PATHWAY TO POWER IN THE FAR EAST. OUT OF THIS THREATS TO THAILAND'S SOVEREIGNTY AROSE. HISTORY NEVER REPEATS ITSELF EXACTLY, BUT THERE ARE MANY PARALLELS BETWEEN THE HEYDAY OF BRITISH IMPERIAL POWER IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD AND THE EMERGING OUTLINE OF WHAT MAY PROVE TO BE A NEW IMPERIAL SOVIET DESIGN.

6. IN FACT, WITH THE REOPENING OF THE SUEZ CANAL, THE SOVIET
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INTERESTS IN UNINTERRUPTED UTILIZATION OF THE INDIAN OCEAN MAY TRANSCEND THAT OF ANY POWER. THERE WOULD BE REAL CONCERN SHOULD THE INDIAN OCEAN BECOME A "SOVIET LAKE" AS IT ONCE WAS A "BRITISH LAKE." THE PRESENT AND POTENTIAL LINKAGE OF SOVIET AND INDIAN INTERESTS IN GAINING A DOMINANT POSITION IN THIS OCEAN COMPLEX ARE RELATED TO THE MOST SALIENT INTERNATIONAL FACT OF LIFE IN THE 1970S: THE SINO-SOVIET STRUGGLE. THE SOVIET AND CHINESE DESIGNS FOR SOUTHEAST ASIA AND WHAT PART THAT THEIR PRESENTLY ANTAGONISTIC INTERESTS MAY PLAY IN THIS STRUGGLE ARE NOT YET CLEAR, BUT IT IS EASY TO PROJECT A NUMBER OF ALLIANCES, MANEUVERS, AND EFFORTS TO EXERT INFLUENCE THAT MIGHT NOT BE WHOLLY TO THE LIKING OF LITTORAL NATIONS WHOSE LIFELINE IN NO SMALL MEASURE DEPENDS UPON FREEDOM OF THE SEAS, INCLUDING THE INDIAN OCEAN.

7. MORE THAN PURE ALTRUISM MAY ALSO UNDERLIE INDIA'S PROMOTION OF THE INDIAN OCEAN ZONE OF PEACE. NEHRU SAID IN PARLIAMENT ON MARCH 17, 1950: "WE ARE IN A STRATEGIC PART OF ASIS, SET IN THE CENTRE OF THE INDIAN OCEAN WITH ULTIMATE PAST AND PRESENT CONNECTIONS WITH WESTERN ASIA, SOUTHEAST ASIS AND FOR EASTERN ASIA. EVEN IF WE COULD WE WOULD NOT WANT TO IGNORE THIS FACT." INDIA WOULD LIKE TO EVENTUALLY EXERCISE SOME KIND

OF CONTROL OVER WHAT IS BECOMING ONE OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST SEA TRADE ROUTES.

8. WE HAVE AMPLE INDICATIONS OF LATE (INCLUDING THE INDIAN ATOMIC BOMB) CONCERNING INDIA'S ASPIRATIONS FOR AN INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE WORLD. AN INDIAN SPHERE OF INFLUENCE IS A FIRST STEP IN ASCENDING THE LADDER OF POWER, ALBEIT SUCH A PROCESS MIGHT NOT NECESSARILY PORTEND GOOD THINGS FOR SMALLER COUNTRIES IN THE REGION. NO ASIAN POWER, BIG OR SMALL, CAN IGNORE THE POSSIBLE SIGNIFICANCE OF TWO EMERGING, RIVAL GROUPINGS: THE USSR, AFGHANISTAN, IRAQ, A YEMEN, SOMALIA AND INDIAV AND THE PRC, PAKISTAN, AND IRAN (WITH POSSIBLY A CONNECTION WITH SAUDI ARABIA VIA IRAN AND WITH TANZANIA VIA THE PRC). THIS CONFLICTING CONSTELLATION OF FORCES WILL INEVITABLY MAKE THE INDIAN OCEAN A THEATER OF CONTENTION IN THE SINO-SOVIET STRUGGLE.

9. THE UNITED STATES' INTEREST IS IN KEEPING THE INDIAN OCEAN AREA FROM FALLING UNDER THE HEGEMONY OF ANY SINGLE POWER, CONFIDENTIAL

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KEEPING THE SEA LANES OPEN, AND SAFEGUARDING THE LONG-ESTABLISHED PRINCIPLE OF FREEDOM OF THE SEAS. ITS NAVAL ACTIVITIES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN ARE AIMED AT THIS AND NOTHING MORE. THE INCREASED ACTIVITY HAS BEEN A RESPONSIVE ACTION, NOT AN AGGRESSIVE ONE. THIS WAS EVEN RECOGNIZED BY CERTAIN INFLUENTIAL INDIANS. AS DINESH SINGH, FORMER MINISTER FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS UNDER PRIME MINISTER LAL BAHADUR SHASTRI, WROTE IN THE ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY OF INDIA ON JUNE 2, 1974: "... THE FIRST EFFORT SHOULD HAVE BEEN MADE TO FORCE THE SOVIET NAVY OUT RATHER THAN TO BRING IN THE AMERICAN NAVY. INDIA COULD NOT HAVE OPPOSED SUCH A MOVE."

10. RATHER THAN RISKING CONFLICT BY TRYING "TO FORCE THE SOVIET OUT," AS SINGH SUGGESTS, THE UNITED STATES SOUGHT TO ESTABLISH A PEACEFUL EQUILIBRIUM BY MAKING IT POSSIBLE "TO BRING IN THE AMERICAN NAVY" FROM TIME TO TIME. THE UNITED STATES DID THIS ONLY AFTER TRYING TO REACH AN UNDERSTANDING WITH THE SOVIETS ON NAVAL ACTIVITY IN THE INDIAN OCEAN. ON THE OTHER HAND THE INDIANS HAVE NEVER MENTIONED SOVIET ACQUISITION OF ACCESS TO NAVAL AND MOORING FACILITIES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN.

11. WE SHOULD NOT OVERLOOK THE SOVIET CONTRIBUTION TO THE WAVE OF INFLATION ADVERSELY AFFECTING MOST COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD INCLUDING THAILAND. WHILE THE FOURFOLD INCREASE IN THE PRICE OF MIDDLE EAST OIL IS THE MAIN CULPRIT, SOVIET INFLUENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN COUNTRIES IS LARGELY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SIZE OF THE INCREASES, IN THAT SOVIET BACKING MADE THE INCREASE LARGELY NONNEGOTIABLE. A DIRECT INCREASE IN SOVIET POWER AND INFLUENCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN, OR EVEN AN INDIRECT ONE USING THE INDIANS AS SURROGATES, WOULD POSSIBLY LEAD TO FURTHER ECONOMIC DISRUPTION WITH CONSEQUENCES FOR THAILAND

AND OTHER DEVELOPING COUNTRIES.

12. IT SEEMS THAT THAILAND AND THE UNITED STATES HAVE MUCH TO GAIN BY ALIGNING POLICIES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN. THE UNITED STATES IS NOT IN PRINCIPLE IN THE LEAST OPPOSED TO A "ZONE OF PEACE," BUT SEES DANGER IN SOME APPROACHED TO ITS REALIZATION. IT MUST REALLY BE A ZONE OF PEACE AND NOT SIMPLY A FACADE FOR THE EXERCISE OF ONE'S POWER HEGEMONY THAT WOULD INEVITABLY LEAD TO AN ORDERING OF REGIONAL AFFAIRS IN AN UNWANTED FASHION.
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13. THAILAND HAS MUCH AT STATE. AS THE COUNTRY CONTINUES TO DEVELOP AND TO UTILIZE ITS NATURAL RESOURCES, IT WILL BE INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT HOW AFFAIRS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN DEVELOP. UNTIL THE THREAT OF ONE COUNTRY SEEKING PREPONDERANT POWER RECEDES OR UNTIL MACHINERY CAN BE ESTABLISHED TO ENSURE SMALL COUNTRIES A FAIR BARGAIN IN REGIONAL NEGOTIATIONS, A CAREFULLY CALCULATED AND CAUTIOUS MONITORING OF DEVELOPMENTS IS ESSENTIAL.

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